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Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Report on the third session (29 March-2 April 2004)

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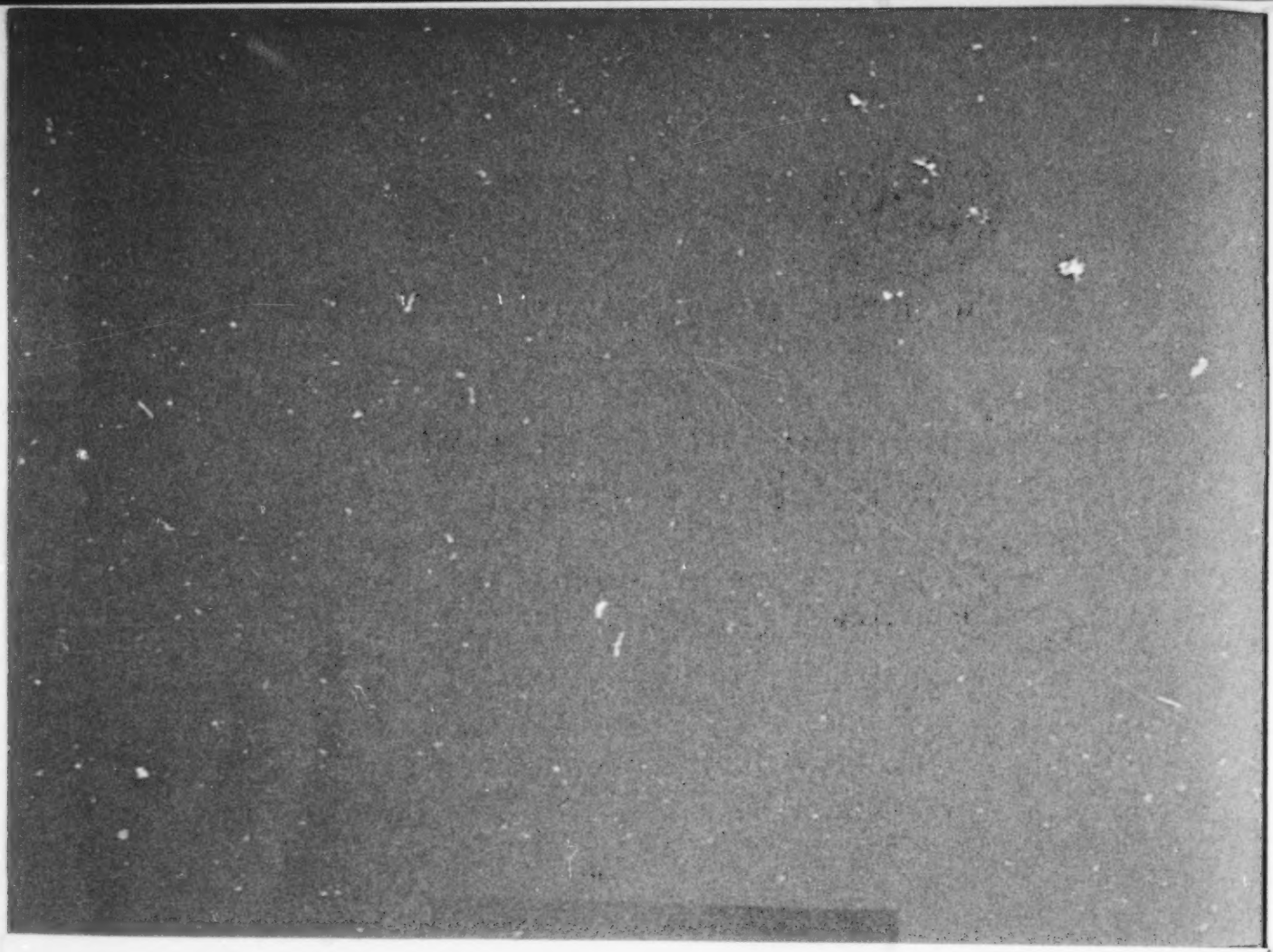

The front cover and inner sleeve for the title "Committee of Experts on Public Administration: Report on the Third Session (29 March-2 April 2004)" E/2004/44 E/C.16/2004/9, reads **Supplement No.44** in error. It should read **Supplement No.24.**

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Report on the third session (29 March-2 April 2004)

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Note

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Summary

The present report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the third session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, held at United Nations Headquarters from 29 March to 2 April 2004. The Committee, which was established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2001/45, consists of 24 experts appointed in their personal capacity for a four-year period. In accordance with Council resolution 2003/60, the Committee dealt with the following substantive items: (a) revitalizing public administration: (i) the role of human resources in revitalizing public administration; (ii) the role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society; (iii) strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach; (b) public sector institutional capacity for African renewal; (c) analysis of existing basic data on the public sector; and (d) review of the activities of the United Nations in the area of public administration.

Based on the discussion of the above-mentioned topics, the Committee produced a set of recommendations for consideration by the Economic and Social Council, Member States and the United Nations Secretariat.

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Chapter I
Organization of the session

A. Duration of the session

1. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration, which was established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2001/45 and consists of 24 experts appointed in their personal capacity by the Council upon the nomination of the Secretary-General, held its third session at United Nations Headquarters from 29 March to 2 April 2004.

B. Attendance

2. The session was attended by the following members: Marie-Françoise Bechtel (France), Conseiller d'État, Conseil d'État; Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdellah (Morocco), President, Al Akhawayn University; Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira (Brazil), Getúlio Vargas Foundation; Giuseppe Franco Ferrari (Italy), Chair for Public Comparative Law, L. Bocconi University of Milan; Geraldine J. Fraser-Moleketi (South Africa), Minister for Public Service and Administration; Werner Jann (Germany), Chair for Political Science, Administration and Organization, Potsdam University; Barbara Kudrycka (Poland), Rector, Bialystok School of Public Administration; Gonzalo D. Martner Fanta (Chile), Deputy Secretary, Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia; Kuldeep Mathur (India), Academic Director, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Beshara Merhej (Lebanon), Member of Parliament and Minister of State; José Oscar Monteiro (Mozambique), Coordinator of Project ISAP — Instituto Superior da Administração Pública, Mozambique, and Visiting Professor, University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa); Akira Nakamura (Japan), Dean of the Graduate School, Department of Political Science, Meiji University; Apolo Nsibambi (Uganda), Prime Minister; Jaime Rodriguez-Arana Munoz (Spain), Director, Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública; Dennis A. Rondinelli (United States of America), Glaxo Distinguished International Professor of Management, Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina; Otton Solis-Fallas (Costa Rica), Member of the Board of the Open University of Costa Rica; Wang Xiaochu (China), Vice-Minister of Personnel; and Volodymyr G. Yatsuba (Ukraine), State Secretary, Cabinet of Ministers. The following members could not attend: Jean-Marie Atangana Mebara (Cameroon), Minister of State, Secretary-General, Presidency of the Republic; Jocelyne Bourgon (Canada), Ambassador, Canadian Permanent Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Petrus Compton (Saint Lucia), Attorney-General and Minister of Justice; Patricia A. Santo Tomas (Philippines), Minister of Labour and Employment; Sakhir Thiam (Senegal), President, University of Dakar-Bourguiba; and Borwornsak Uwanno (Thailand), Secretary-General, King Prajadhipok Institute.

C. Agenda

3. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/60, the agenda of the Committee for its third session was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Revitalizing public administration:
   (a) Role of human resources in revitalizing public administration;
   (b) Role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society;
   (c) Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach.
4. Public sector institutional capacity for African renewal.
5. Analysis of existing basic data on the public sector.
6. Review of the United Nations activities in the area of public administration.
7. Proposed programme of work and agenda for the next session of the Committee.

D. Election of officers

4. In view of the resignation of the Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Jin Liqun (China), the Committee agreed to elect as Vice-Chairperson Mr. Wang Xiaochu (China). Thus, the Bureau of the Committee was modified as follows:

Chairperson:
Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi (Uganda)

Vice-Chairpersons:
Marie-Françoise Bechtel (France)
Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira (Brazil)
Wang Xiaochu (China)
Jocelyne Bourgon (Canada)*

Rapporteur:
José Oscar Monteiro (Mozambique)

* Unable to attend.

Chapter II
Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

Item I
Revitalizing public administration

1. The challenges of revitalizing public administration are complex and multidimensional, as technical issues are intertwined with the political dimension of defining the scope and role of the State. Two concerns thus come into play, namely, (a) what the public service should do, which involves a set of political and context-specific considerations and (b) how the public sector should perform its duties, that is to say, how the practices and policies of public administration should be reformed to make it more efficient, responsive, accountable, transparent and sensitive to fundamental rights. While the two concerns cannot be fully separated or considered independently, determining the scope of the State involves decisions taken by decision makers who are, for the most part, external to the public administration. Therefore, the central question within the purview of revitalizing public administration is, What needs to happen within the domain of public administration to support the changing role of the State and ensure that the goals of the State, as decided by the political elite and populace, are fulfilled?

2. To support the role of the State and ensure that its goals are fulfilled, public administration continues to evolve, absorbing new methods and improving and adapting practices according to social and technological progress, internal and external pressures and cultural and contextual challenges. New public management (NPM) has been cited for its positive aspects which have led to more responsive and efficient public administration, particularly in certain settings such as Western Europe and Latin America. The fact that NPM strategies have been more effective under certain conditions than others indicates that the context and constraints of different settings need to be taken into account. In Asia and Africa, the private sector and the full potential and institutional diversity of civil society — not limited to one model — are often not enough utilized to supplement and partner effectively with government in the delivery of services. Further, government does not have sufficient regulatory mechanisms to oversee how well such partnerships are operating. Without stronger partners and until such accountability issues are resolved, services risk being compromised if the State is "replaced" or services are delegated. The "rollback" of the State has been an inappropriate strategy in those situations. New forms of cooperation and participation need to be explored taking the contextual factors into account. In sum, practices and policies that have led to positive outcomes should be reviewed and the more successful aspects of new policies such as NPM, should be adopted, adapted, evaluated and applied within the constraints of the differing levels of development, the exigencies of different societies and political systems and the characteristics of the public administration systems to which they are applied, while correcting excesses that are incompatible with the nature of public service.

3. In general, the "public" in public administration has been lost. Public administration comprises management, but is far larger because it encompasses first and foremost an objective exercise of authority on behalf of the whole community. It

includes the production of norms and issuing of commands to serve the more general interests of the community, which include those of every citizen, but go beyond its mere sum. Revitalizing public administration must therefore entail bringing back the "public interest" and public participation in public administration. The purposes of revitalizing public administration must be linked to its overall purposes, namely, to support the goals of the State in promoting economic development, improving social conditions and overall well-being, and strengthening the rule of law — in other words, to bring the "public" back into public administration. Public respect for government is directly related to citizens' perceptions of how effectively and efficiently it provides services that meet citizens' needs and values. While missions and structures of public administration systems differ worldwide, similar principles and values will be in evidence universally in terms of the overall purpose and goals. Concretely enumerated in the Millennium Development Goals, these include the achievement of the eradication of poverty, the attainment of gender equality, the provision of universal health care and education, the maintenance of environmental sustainability and the fostering of sustainable human development, which represent the overarching objectives to which all States aspire. The role of providing services to clients is crucial to revitalizing public administration.

4. Yet, there is a large and increasing gap between public demands and what the public sector can do. In order to address and counter this, revitalizing public administration must employ innovative and multidimensional strategies. Public administration systems must be fully supportive of and geared to faster economic and social development. Without this, public services cannot be delivered effectively to all of those in need, especially those most in need. Public administration must be consciously inclusive, engaged in new and creative partnerships, and committed to sustained participatory governance. The processes for revitalizing public administration should employ the same approaches for engagement and participation that it hopes to achieve. To do so, the methods must be rooted in a socio-political consensus that takes the multitude of public interests and its various "publics" into account. Public administrations must fully utilize their own human capital and embrace new partnerships with other stakeholders and key players in civil society and the private sector in well thought out and sustainable ways. It must embrace and manage change, particularly in the context of leveraging the positive opportunities of globalization and capitalizing on the vast potential of the new knowledge society. It must invest its time, energy and capacity in evaluating, transferring and adapting innovation in ways that are truly appropriate and relevant to its unique, culturally and historically specific context.

5. Even with the evolution of public administration practices over time and the more profound shifts associated with newer approaches such as NPM, the core values and mission of public administration, including the nature of the public goods and common interests, remain unchanged and well accepted. Public administration remains the pre-eminent locus and responsible guarantor of the public interest and of providing public service. Public administration is a vital player within public management and governance and it therefore needs to be revamped, revitalized and refocused, given the centrality of its position. Furthermore, there are models with different balances and relationships among government, the private sector and civil society that create public value. However, new concerns about sustainability of development have arisen. The best attributes associated with each arrangement and

with the differences in emphasis among public administration, NPM and participatory governance can work in concert towards the agreed main goal of supporting the State with respect to achieving human development, economic progress and improvement of social conditions. As public administration continues to provide the foundation for maintaining confidence in the stability and continuity of the State, efforts to enhance its professionalism and integrity and buttress its impartiality, legality, and transparency are critical to the fulfilment of the State's overarching goals.

Item I (a)
The role of human resources in revitalizing public administration

6. In dealing with the issue of *human resources*, the need for a holistic approach to reform, within a coherent context of policy, organization and leadership, should be stressed. Such an approach is necessary, given the shifting role of the State, which needs to be aligned with reforms in public administration. Public administration depends on an enabling environment, based on quality staff who take pride in the public service, demonstrate professionalism and work under healthy conditions. Thus, the five building blocks needed to reform human resources management so as to realize these conditions are:

- *Appropriate* legal, policy and regulatory *frameworks*.
- Identifying *common values*, attitudes and *professional standards*.
- Developing a *competency framework* for core professional groups.
- Designing effective *capacity development strategies*.
- Institutionalizing human resources planning.

7. Human resources capacity is key to high-quality public administration. Hence, capacity development needs a long-term perspective and commitment, with emphasis on:

- *Professionalism*, based on competence, ethics, the public interest, and impartiality.
- *Merit*, determined by testing and continuous evaluation at every stage of a career.
- *Monitoring and control*, including systems of financial control with clear sanctions, based on well-established criteria, motivation and plans.
- Ongoing training and the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) for training.
- *Social representation*: recruiting public servants who are technically competent and also reflect the diversity of the social composition of the country.
- *Recognition* of success and commitment of civil servants.

8. The Committee felt that the following issues needed to be addressed in the process of revitalizing human resources in public administration.

- How to move from an exclusively "rule-based" to a "value-based" human resources management framework, that is to say, an approach that focuses on

fundamentally changing human behaviour, motivating the leadership and encouraging innovation, while having the necessary regulations.

- How to foster an organizational culture that furthers individual talent and minimizes a "negative" environment.
- How to recruit competent individuals.
- How to achieve the right mix of centralized core human resources management functions, such as policy-setting and decentralized support functions such as recruitment.
- The importance of capacity-building among both the political and administrative leadership in building teams and a shared commitment to policy directions.
- The extent to which political impartiality of senior civil servants can be maintained under the pressure for greater responsiveness, and the effects of partisan, ethnic, family or group interference upon the merit principle and performance in respect of building a non-partisan civil service, politically committed to the common good ("intérêt général").
- The long-term erosion of the esprit de corps and problems of retention of the senior executive service, when recruitment is primarily based on specific positions, without there being an appropriate combination of contractual and career employment to meet the needs of a country.
- The need for the pressures for competitive remuneration with respect to the private sector in order to attract employees with talent and needed skills to be reconciled with budgetary constraints, sometimes externally imposed, on the overall public sector wage bill.
- The collective need, in affected regions, to stem and manage brain drain through regional mobility and exchange programmes, through cooperation between emitting and receiving Governments and through bold measures aimed at improving conditions of pay and service.
- Increasing the cost-effectiveness of training programmes by encouraging vertical training programmes that focus on organizations rather than horizontal programmes that focus on selected individuals; and the need for the process of training to be linked to the strategic objectives and adopted after effective and independent evaluation.
- Increasing pride in the public service based on improved performance by "street-level bureaucracies" and through publicizing and recognizing good performance and exemplary conduct.
- The realization that public service improvements and a rise in its quality may not be able to keep up with rising public expectations, given resource limitations and the increasing number of tasks that Governments are called upon to undertake, and evaluation of the extent to which institutions that have performed well in the past may have become obsolete.
- How to internalize the practices and the cases that are formative within the model of the learning organization.

- The need for each State to define or redefine its endeavours in light of the Millennium Development Goals regarding local government, the private sector, civil society and the partnerships between all stakeholders, so as to make the Millennium Development Goals achievable.

9. The Committee considered that the discussion on human resources should take into account the changing role of the State and the need for administrative realignment. It acknowledged that these macrochanges have a significant bearing on the overall direction of human resources management. Therefore, human resources development needs to take place within a broader context of policy changes, institutional reforms and involvement of leadership. In short, human resources development in the public sector is a long-term and necessary project.

Item I (b)
The role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society

10. Within the overarching agenda of revitalizing public administration, the Committee agreed that the issues related to the role of knowledge in a society and to public administration as a consumer and producer of knowledge were of great importance. Knowledge can be viewed as a product or as an object of public policy. At the same time, it is an input into public policy. Additionally, in the transition to the knowledge society, the enabling role of the State cannot be overemphasized in respect of providing access to education for all.

11. In such deliberations, the understanding of knowledge in its dual form, namely, as explicit knowledge (information) and as tacit knowledge, should be taken into account.

12. An innovative way of looking at knowledge entails abandoning the traditional approach of assigning specific roles to different actors as creators, disseminators and users of knowledge. These functions are all part of a single process of knowledge development. They are embedded in the whole society, in all its structures in business, government and civil society, including universities.

13. Regarding the knowledge society, the Committee noted the difficulty of accepting the notion that all societies were knowledge societies, while recognizing that a specific set of measures was needed to fully achieve the "knowledge" dimension in social life, taking into account markedly different social settings.

14. In this context, the Committee felt that the focus of attention had to shift from Governments to governance. The next big question in the debate on governance will be that of reinventing a more active role for civil society transcending government structures, and moving towards a more inclusive, organic linkage and a new division of roles among government, business and civil society. While knowledge-creation and proper channelling of information constitute the underpinning requirements, care should be taken to properly manage information. Both the volume and veracity of information are of concern here.

15. The Committee stressed that a knowledge society must be productive, sustainable and socially coherent. In this context, the issue of human rights and freedoms is important to ensure that the pervasiveness of the new ICT in government structures should not lead to encroachment on the human right to privacy.

16. Additionally, the Committee considered the need to make the knowledge society inclusive. This goes beyond the digital divide. It concerns not only literacy and education, but also the broader issue of access to and circulation of information, the right to creativity and freedom of expression.

17. The issue of indigenous knowledge was stressed by the Committee in terms of the need for its recognition and protection. An approach was suggested that would balance the development and application of "new knowledge" and the harvesting and utilization of the traditional knowledge. Concern was expressed about protection of proprietary rights to indigenous knowledge, especially in view of efforts by some multinational corporations to package that knowledge and use the patent system to acquire intellectual property rights to it.

Item 1 (c)
Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach

18. A basic tenet and subject of agreement by the experts was that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended crucially and commensurably on the effort by countries, at the national, local and international levels, to foster a culture of partnership; and, further, that such partnerships were predicated on two requirements: first, the mobilization and augmentation of resources to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and targets and, second, the legitimization and localization of the Millennium Development Goals-related policy process at the national level. At the national and local levels, the role of partnerships is even more critical to enabling Governments to mobilize and expand the domestic resource base while fostering, through participation, accountability and transparency, the elements of improved savings, quality allocation and utilization and, indeed, the equitable distribution of such resources. Partnerships are critically important to good governance in promoting a higher level of implementation and compliance, centered around common policy goals that involve the pooling of resources, both financial and intellectual, jointly shared by government and civil society. Partnerships, particularly with the civil society organizations, can help mainstream the concerns of the poor and thus improve collegiality in formulating pro-poor policies. This requires a broader definition of civil society, which is inclusive of multiple community-based organizations where the poor are present. It is understood that partnerships can be differently defined, but as interpreted in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, they invariably involve civil society in its broader sense, which includes non-governmental organizations as well as private sector social networks, organizations and communities.

19. Though the value of partnerships was increasingly acknowledged in conjunction with a conscious attempt to harness their potential at the international, national and local levels, the Committee was aware that not all partnerships were equally valuable for development. Sometimes, private sector companies hijack partnerships to secure profits for themselves. Predatory partnerships, where non-representative and non-inclusive special interests or parochial groups capture the reins of power, are able to disenfranchise large sections of civil society while speaking on its behalf. Similarly, and especially at the international level, unequal partnerships in trade and finance can lead to an unequal distribution of the gains of trade and of global commerce. Hence, at all levels, but especially at the national and local levels, there is a need to enhance the capacities of the Governments to develop

mechanisms and skills to forge suitable partnerships and, at the same time, develop the capacities of the civil society to dialogue with its domestic partners. At the international level, there is also the need to support national Governments in their negotiations and partnering with international agencies and transnational corporations in a collegial and analytical manner.

20. In the context of the above, the issues of legitimacy and standards figured as the key concerns in the discussion of the Committee. There was a call for legitimacy to ensure that certain groups did not gain a monopoly at the expense of the broader civil society, and thus marginalize or sideline the key concerns that those groups were expected to represent. The Committee also stressed the need for standards to ensure that there was a transparent regulatory framework and an enabling environment, within which partnerships were encouraged and institutionalized within the overall governance arrangements of a country. On these intertwined issues, those of legitimacy and standards, members of the Committee felt that much more work was required with respect to identifying the prerequisites for effective and participatory partnerships in line with good governance, as well as with respect to lessons to be learned from successful and sustainable partnerships. Hence, in the context of the concerns of legitimacy and standards, the issue of sustainability of good partnerships was raised, as well as that of the need for capacity-building to ensure that there was an institutional framework that reflected contemporary values, challenges and opportunities. Partnerships can help to introduce drastic changes in respect of the simplification of administrative procedures which will be felt by all citizens. They can also help to identify the best practices from the private sector that are adaptable to the public sector. Still, the changing role of the State and proper management of partnerships require institutions and procedures for evaluation of the standards of delivering public services in both spheres (private and public). The concluding remarks of the experts reaffirmed the centrality of partnerships in the revitalization of public administration, as an agent of change and, as the report of the Secretariat on the subject (E/C.16/2004/5) had made clear, as a means of re-committing society to good governance in general and to the Millennium Development Goals in particular.

Item II
Public-sector institutional capacity for African renewal

21. The Committee noted that developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa was critical in responding to the momentous challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in general, and poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa in particular. Without overcoming obstacles in governance and public administration, Africa will continue to lag behind in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Surmounting the obstacles requires, at the minimum (a) entrenching the ethos and practices of good governance (for example, civic engagement and participation in governance, integrity, accountability and transparency); (b) enforcing the rule of law; (c) promoting equity and equality; and (d) building governance and public administration, including the requisite capacities to pre-empt civil strife, and foster peace and security.

22. Governance and public administration institutions that are likely to prove adequate in meeting contemporary and future challenges must be: (a) purpose-driven with clear socio-politico-economic goals, missions and objectives; (b) action-oriented; (c) capable of balancing the imperatives of change with the need for

stability; (d) underpinned by a set of rules and behavioural norms (the "institutional culture"); and (e) deeply rooted in the socio-politico-economic and cultural realities of the countries or region in question. One specific caution in this regard is that Africa should not be taken as homogeneous. For national-level institution-building efforts, a case-by-case approach needs to be adopted.

23. To be positioned to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, institutions of governance and public administration in Africa need to: (a) have full consensus and legitimacy in the eyes of the public they serve; (b) be under quality and visionary leadership; (c) balance the forces of change with those of tradition; (d) be receptive and adaptable to changing circumstances; (e) have the capacity to manage diversity and conflict; and (f) have effective coordination, integration and synergy among themselves as well as with institutions in the civil society and private sector at the local, national, regional and global levels.

24. In respect of building effective institutions of governance and public administration in Africa, there is a need to draw from the positive historical aspects and ongoing initiatives on the continent, especially the regional initiatives, such as the Governance and Public Administration Programme of the African Union and its strategic framework. The foundation laid by African leaders in putting together structural arrangements at regional levels and strategic frameworks which need to be harmonized with national-level strategies needs to be taken advantage of to strengthen the institutions. In this respect, supporting institutional development needs to go beyond the national levels and include both the local governments and the regional bodies. The institution-building and development needs of the regional economic communities — as the building blocks of the African economic community — should be fully addressed not only by African Governments but also by their development partners.

25. While building strong institutions in Africa will require innovations and clear-sighted learning from the institutional experiences of societies undergoing similar societal upheavals and demands of nation-building so as to avoid replicating inapplicable institutional structures from elsewhere, there is a strong need to place a particular focus on: (a) popular participation in constitution-making; (b) constitutionalism; (c) enhancement of the oversight, law-making and related capacities of the legislature; (d) enhancement of the capacity of the judiciary including searching and implementing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to enhance accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of judicial services; (e) reform of the civil service, with special emphasis on its adaptability, citizen-responsiveness, acquisition of capacity to share information and build partnerships, reinstatement of the ethos of impartiality, political non-partisanship, professionalism and merit; (f) strengthening the top levels of the executive branch such as the presidency and ministries; (g) strengthening the institutions of participatory democracy and local governance; (h) harmonizing traditional and modern institutions; and (i) pursuit of flexible but sustained programmes for decentralization and participatory decentralization.

26. Special attention must be focused on the situations of the six African countries that are in, or are emerging from, crisis. Not only are their institutional capacity needs more acute, but also the approaches, methodologies and strategies for meeting them are likely to be different. In such countries, the issue is not to revitalize public administration institutions but rather to build them. Financial, material and technical

support to such countries and, indeed, to other African countries, should be provided without undue constraining conditionality. The minimum condition should be the establishment of the rule of law; democracy, however it is defined by the countries themselves; and the ownership of governance programmes by the recipient countries.

27. Developing governance and public administration institutions on the continent should include and intensify the research on and inclusion of endogenous leadership systems in modern governance and public administration. In this way, the local or traditional institutions will be modernized while the "modern" ones will be indigenized. The result is likely to be a more robust public administration which is not only grounded in the sociocultural milieu it serves but also integrated in a globalized environment.

28. To the extent that such local and traditional institutions were basically negated by the colonial powers, and systematically replaced by those based on Western models, the context in which governance and public administration institutions at all levels are operated and their historical antecedents need to be analysed and understood during the process of institutional development on the continent.

Item III
Analysis of existing basic data on the public sector

29. The discussion in the Committee highlighted the importance of basic data in the public sector. The Committee agreed that current data on expenditure and taxation compiled from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank sources had presented an incomplete picture owing to several omissions and also to lack of consolidation. For example, current data represent only the central government expenditure, but not the data of the local governments. The current data also exclude data on public enterprises. There are also problems with the definition of what constitutes expenditure and consumption. To construct consolidated data on public sector consumption and expenditure, these anomalies need to be removed.

30. In terms of delivery of services, these data-related weaknesses render it difficult to compare public sector effectiveness with that of the private sector. However, from the taxation data presented, it became apparent that low levels of taxation (measured by the ratio of tax revenue to gross domestic product (GDP)) prevail in most developing countries compared with the levels observed in the developed countries. Second, the data on public expenditure and consumption also demonstrate an incidence of relatively high levels of centralization in developing countries as compared with those of the developed countries. The Committee agreed to report these findings to the Economic and Social Council, so that developed countries' benchmarks could be used to assist developing countries in reviewing their situation vis-à-vis several governance indicators such as tax administration, decentralization etc.

31. The Committee observed that the current data set on consumption and expenditure was unable to provide data on public sector productivity. Some indicators to measure public sector productivity need to be made available to the Committee to help understand the issue of cost-effectiveness of the State (especially in developing countries) vis-à-vis the private sector as well as the developed countries.

32. For this to be done, data on average costs per output in the public sector, by function, need to be collected and compared with those in the private sector so as to dispel or confirm the preconception that the private sector is more efficient. An appropriate methodology will need to be developed for collecting data on productivity by function. This can have an important impact on government policy decisions.

33. The Committee agreed that, while basic data presented by the Secretariat had provided useful information regarding the size of the State, its usefulness was somewhat compromised without links of those data to productivity. The Secretariat should make an effort to rectify this. If no data are available, the Secretariat may have to take the initiative of encouraging Governments to collect data on these activities.

34. The Committee recognized that the data set on government consumption and expenditure had not included the informal sector, despite the fact that the performance of the informal sector did affect GDP. The Committee was aware that if the informal sector was underestimated, then GDP would be underestimated, and ratios of all public sector measures to GDP would experience biases upward.

35. In relation to the format of a budget, it was clarified that programme budgeting did not change the results. However, change from cash or accrual accounting would greatly affect the recorded expenditure and consumption of government.

36. Finally, on the question of using indicators to determine the quality of government activity, it was agreed that the present data set did not provide for this analysis, and that other types of indicators were needed.

Item IV
Review of the United Nations activities in the area of public administration

37. The Committee commended the presentation made by the Secretariat on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration, Finance and Development reflecting the specific activities conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as some important joint initiatives undertaken in cooperation with various partners in 2003. It expressed appreciation for the work and progress that had been achieved in the past year, and emphasized the importance of an integrated approach, which was based upon the interaction with respect to substantive activities, technical cooperation and information-sharing in the work of the Secretariat.

38. The Committee noted the high-quality work of the Secretariat in the preparation of the relevant background documents. The Committee had familiarized itself with and supported the Secretariat's work plans for 2004-2005.

39. The Committee reviewed and unanimously endorsed the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 for subprogramme 8, Public administration, finance and development, of programme 7, Economic and social affairs, for submission to the Committee for Programme and Coordination and eventually to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. The Committee underscored the importance of translating broad objectives of the framework into strategic actions to be considered in more detail at its session in 2005.

40. The Committee also took note of the positive findings indicated in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat on the in-depth evaluation of the Programme in Public Administration, Finance and Development (A/AC.51/2004/3, annex) and concurred with its recommendations.

41. The Committee took note with appreciation of the accomplishments of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) achieved upon the completion of the first phase of the programme. Recognizing the vital role that UNPAN plays as a central part of a global network of public administration organizations, the Committee has welcomed the initiation of the second phase of its implementation.

42. The Committee noted that, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 57/277, the Secretariat would continue to provide substantive support to the Global Forum on Reinventing Government, the largest conference held on public administration and governance.

43. Noting the close cooperation of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, Finance and Development with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at both country and regional levels, the Committee encouraged further discussion in order to enhance that cooperation.

44. Finally, the Committee debated how to better fulfil its mandate, and decided on the organization of its future work in such a way as to contribute more meaningfully to the work of the United Nations and its institutions through inputs reflecting its diverse professional, academic and intellectual composition.

B. Recommendations

1. To the Economic and Social Council

Recommendation 1

45. The centrality of public administration with respect to the success of the State is validated by its inextricable linkages to the achievement of States' national development goals. Those linkages are essential in respect of the planning and provision of essential public services as well as in the creation of an enabling environment in order for the private sector to flourish and the civil society to operate. The Economic and Social Council should reaffirm the role of the public service in the fulfilment of the specific national goals for socio-economic development, as they are key indicators of Member States' attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the Committee reiterates its earlier recommendation to the Council that it devote one of its next high-level segments to the changing role of a public administration geared to development, both economic and human, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with public service delivery as the pivotal element. The segment could be entitled "A service-oriented public administration for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals".

Recommendation 2

46. In response to the request contained in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 58/231, relating to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of

the resumed fiftieth session of the Assembly on public administration and development, the Committee recommends that the Economic and Social Council propose to the Assembly the following options, which are not mutually exclusive:

(a) Hosting the Global Forum on Reinventing Government at United Nations Headquarters in 2006, at no cost to the United Nations budget;

(b) Devoting the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2006 to the subject described in recommendation 1;

(c) Celebrating the United Nations Public Service Day and the awarding of the United Nations Public Service Awards in a more visible manner, with a view to highlighting the value of public service and promoting its positive achievements.

Recommendation 3

47. **Since public administration acts as the main facilitator in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the Economic and Social Council consider how to leverage and integrate the work of the Committee in intergovernmental processes, and particularly in the work and deliberations of the commissions that discuss developmental issues. In this connection, the Committee regrets the fact that other subsidiary bodies of the Council, such as the Commission for Social Development and the Committee for Development Policy, have dealt with issues of governance and public administration without requesting inputs from the Committee. The Committee feels that, had its contribution been sought, such discussions would have been more productive and duplication would have been avoided.**

Recommendation 4

48. **The Economic and Social Council should recommend to the international organizations and the donor community that they should increase financial, material and technical support to African States with a view to strengthening governance and public administration institutions on the continent.**

Recommendation 5

49. **The Committee also suggests that its next session be devoted to the following items:**

(a) Revitalizing public administration: strategic directions for the future;

(b) Development of a methodology for a bottom-up participatory approach in identifying public administration foundations and principles;

(c) Enhancement of the celebration of the United Nations Public Service Day and of the competition for the United Nations Public Service Awards.

2. **To Member States**

Recommendation 1

50. **Countries should focus the reform of their public administration systems on achieving conditions that will ensure and facilitate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, including faster economic development at national and local levels, as a sine qua non for having the resources needed to deliver adequate and effective services.**

Recommendation 2

51. **Member States should adopt a holistic national strategy to strengthen the management of human capital in the public sector. In doing so, they should revisit core values and principles as outlined in national civil service legislation and charters, examine the coherence of their human resources management institutional framework, review recruitment and promotion strategies and incentives, institutionalize workforce planning, and ensure the representation of marginalized social groups.**

Recommendation 3

52. **National public administrations should see themselves as, and act as, the major facilitating factor in transition to the knowledge society, by enabling knowledge creation, dissemination and utilization throughout the whole society. This would require the adoption of policy frameworks that focus on people and information as society's two main assets.**

Recommendation 4

53. **National public administrations should start perceiving themselves as e-governments, that is to say, the ones that produce and seek knowledge in order to use it to deliver public value to the citizens.**

Recommendation 5

54. **Member States should pursue the issue of partnerships through South-South cooperation, in order to strengthen their capacities at all levels and in order for civil society to develop the necessary framework, tools and processes for formulation of pro-poor policies and programmes and the implementation of the commitments of the Millennium Development Goals.**

Recommendation 6

55. **With the appropriate assistance from the United Nations, if necessary, Member States should develop approaches, methodologies and tools for and knowledge on citizen-based policy formulation and performance monitoring that are independent, transparent and inclusive.**

Recommendation 7

56. **Attention should be paid to low ratios of tax revenues to GDP, an indicator of low internal resource mobilization and, consequently, of low levels of resources for distribution and developmental activities.**

Recommendation 8

57. **Governments should disseminate available data on the public sector and strive to produce consolidated general government accounts that include the revenue by type and expenditure by functions, by all levels of government — central, local, public enterprises etc.**

Recommendation 9

58. **African Governments should take the following specific measures to strengthen their institutional capacities:**

(a) **Implement the Governance and Public Administration Programme of the African Union;**

(b) **Institute mechanisms for the implementation and dissemination of the Charter for the African Public Service;**

(c) **Adopt methods, processes and systems, such as decentralized governance, that foster opportunities for popular participation in the governance and development process;**

(d) **Strengthen the law-making, oversight and budget review capacities of the legislature;**

(e) **Depoliticize the public service and transform it into a professional and non-partisan, but politically sensitive, agent;**

(f) **Strengthen the judiciary to ensure predictability and peaceful resolution of disputes arising out of trade, industrial and international relations.**

3. To the United Nations

Recommendation 1

59. **The United Nations Programme on Public Administration, Finance and Development should continue to focus its work on the reform/revitalization of the practice of public administration, underlining its central role in the achievement of the goals of the State, enumerating and clarifying shared universal principles, and exploring and shedding light on the demands and exigencies that require adaptation in different settings.**

Recommendation 2

60. **Given the centrality of public sector human capital in the process of directing sustainable development, the Secretariat should carry out policy research and technical cooperation on the role of human resources management in revitalizing public administration. One such vehicle, the *World Public Sector Report*, should provide policy options, document practical lessons, and suggest means to foster an exchange of experiences for countries wishing to undertake reforms.**

Recommendation 3

61. The Secretariat should build on the successful outcomes of the Global Forum on Reinventing Government, by assisting in developing regional and national strategies to reinvent government. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of establishing regional and subregional programmes/projects for strengthening the strategic capacity of public administration units.

Recommendation 4

62. The role of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) should be continuously enhanced and the global network should be utilized to develop and disseminate knowledge and information on best practices systematically and regularly.

Recommendation 5

63. The Secretariat should continue studying the issue of the knowledge society and should direct its efforts to specific areas of interest for Governments, for example, the ways in which knowledge development leads to informed public policy-making.

Recommendation 6

64. The Secretariat should develop innovative tools, such as the code of accountability and engaged governance norms, as well as a database of best practices and indicators, and provide the necessary skills to Governments at all levels and civil society to carry out more informed, rigorous and analytical dialogue with their partners, for the development, implementation and monitoring of pro-poor strategies and other Millennium Development Goals.

Recommendation 7

65. The United Nations system should continue providing substantive technical and advisory support aimed at strengthening governance and public administration institutions in African States. It should also assist the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (A/57/304, annex) in implementing the Governance and Public Administration Programme for Africa approved in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in May 2003 and adopted by the African Union, as well as assist in the implementation of regional integration programmes and projects. It should also support research and dissemination of information on the application of traditional institutions and practices to public administration within the context of globalization and regional integration.

Recommendation 8

66. The Secretariat should assist Governments in their efforts to produce better data related to the measurement of public sector efficiency, particularly consolidated accounts for general government that include lower levels of government, and encourage them to collect all available data to measure and to gain a clearer picture of overall public sector efficiency by productivity, unit costs and institutional capacity.

Recommendation 9

67. **The Committee, although appreciating the wide range of activities that are being implemented by the Secretariat in the area of public administration, advises the Secretariat to narrow the focus of the subprogramme's involvement and concentrate more on key priorities, especially in view of the recent reduction of available resources. In this respect, the Committee expressed its regret that, once again, resources for this purpose were reduced, in spite of the Programme's important achievements and of the crucial role that public administration plays in the development process.**

Recommendation 10

68. **The Committee underscores the need for better dissemination of the Secretariat's outputs and promotion of its activities in the area of public administration.**

Recommendation 11

69. **The Secretariat shall promote successful practices of selected applicants for the United Nations Public Service Awards by developing a compendium of good practices worldwide and disseminating them not only through UNPAN but also during various conferences. This will increase the visibility of both the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat.**

Recommendation 12

70. **In taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382), the Committee emphasizes the importance of synergy between normative and technical cooperation work, and that the Secretariat should continue implementing technical cooperation as an essential feeding mechanism into the deliberations of the policy-making organs of the United Nations.**

Annex

List of documents

Document symbol	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
E/C.16/2004/1	2	Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
E/C.16/2004/2	3	Revitalizing public administration as a strategic action for sustainable human development: an overview: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/3	3	Role of human resources in revitalizing public administration: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/4	3	The role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/5	3	Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/6	4	Developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/7	5	Basic data on government expenditure and taxation: report of the Secretariat
E/C.16/2004/8	6	Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007: note by the Secretary-General

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